

U.S. Embassy Freetown, Sierra Leone
Security Message for U.S. Citizens: Update on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Guinea
April 7, 2014

What is Ebola Virus Disease?

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) is one of numerous viral hemorrhagic fevers and is rare and deadly. It spreads through direct, unprotected contact with the blood or secretions of an infected person, or through exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated. The EVD often spreads through health care workers, families and friends who take care of someone with Ebola and have direct contact with body fluids. As of April 7, 2014, there are no confirmed cases of Ebola in Sierra Leone. In neighboring Guinea, there have been 143 suspected cases as of April 4, 2014, with 86 deaths and 45 confirmed cases (suspected case fatality rate of 60 percent). In neighboring Liberia, there are 21 suspected cases with 10 deaths and 3 confirmed positive for Ebola.

How is EVD transmitted?

EVD is thought to be transmitted through direct contact with virus-containing body fluids (e.g., blood, vomitus, urine, feces, and possibly sweat) from a person who has developed signs and symptoms of illness. It is also spread by contact with contaminated objects or infected animals. Unlike contagious illnesses like influenza or measles, EVD has NOT been demonstrated to be spread by the respiratory route and therefore is not spread through casual contact in markets, schools, or buses/trains. Ebola is not transmitted by mosquitoes.

What are the symptoms of EVD?

Symptoms may appear anywhere from two to 21 days after exposure to EVD, though eight to ten days is most common. The incubation period is usually about five to seven days, but may exceed two weeks. A person suffering from EVD presents with a sudden onset of high fever with any of the following: headache, vomiting blood, joint or muscle pain, bleeding through the body openings (eyes, nose, gums, ears, anus), and reduced urination.

What is the risk of contracting EVD?

The risk of contracting EVD is *extremely low*. In a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), handling body fluids of people who had contracted EVD and preparing the dead bodies for funerals was associated with the illness. Household contacts of ill persons with EVD who did not have any direct contact with ill people did **not** contract EVD.

What if a person with EVD is asymptomatic? Can the virus still be transmitted?

No. There is no evidence that asymptomatic persons still in the incubation period are infectious to others. Furthermore, EVD is NOT spread like a respiratory virus by those with early or mild illness. Those who develop EVD are usually so ill that they are bed bound and not walking around in the community and spreading the infection.

How can I best protect myself?

- Avoid contact with ill people.
- Seek medical care if you develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash, or red eye.
- Practice appropriate and good hand hygiene.

Should I avoid certain foods in order to protect myself?

Although there is incomplete understanding of the ecology of EVD in animals, it appears that cases in humans have been associated with the skinning, butchering, and preparing of “bush meat”, including bats, primates (e.g., monkeys, gorillas), and some antelope. Eating undercooked or raw bush meat is therefore another potential risk for EVD. Beef, pork, chicken, lamb, and fish have never been implicated in EVD outbreaks.

How can I find out more?

- Continue to visit the [U.S. Embassy Freetown website and Facebook page](#) for regular updates.
- Visit the World Health Organization [website](#).
- Visit the CDC [website](#).

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Sierra Leone enroll in the [Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Contact the U.S. embassy for up-to-date information on travel restrictions by visiting the [U.S. Embassy Freetown](#) website. You can also get global updates at the U.S. Department of State [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), where you can find the current [Worldwide Caution](#), [Travel Warnings](#), [Travel Alerts](#), and [Country Specific Information](#). If you don't have internet access, you can get current information on safety and security by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States, or for callers from other countries, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Also follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

The U.S. Embassy in Freetown is located at Leicester Square, Regent. If you have questions or concerns about safety or related issues, contact the consular section at the Embassy by sending an email to consularfreetown@state.gov or calling 232(76) 515-000 or 076-515-000. For after- hours emergencies, please call Tel: 232-(76) 515-000 or 076-515-000.